

**A. FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

**Purpose:** This section explains:

- What a certification period is;
- How long a certification period can be based on the household's situation; and
- When a certification period can be changed.

Effective July 1, 2001

**WAC 388-416-0005 How long can I get food assistance?**

- (1) The length of time the department determines your assistance unit (AU) is eligible to get food assistance is called a certification period. The department (we) may certify your AU for up to:
- (a) Twenty-four months if everyone in your AU is elderly and no one in your AU has earned income or cash assistance.
  - (b) Twelve months if everyone in your AU is disabled or elderly and no one in your AU has earned income.
  - (c) Six months if your AU has:
    - (i) Cash assistance; or
    - (ii) Earned income; or
    - (iii) Income, household circumstances, and deductions that are not likely to change.
  - (d) Three months for all other AUs, including AUs with:
    - (i) A migrant or seasonal farmworker;
    - (ii) An Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD);
    - (iii) No income or cash assistance;

- (iv) Expenses that are more than the income the AU gets;
  - (v) Homeless individuals or AU members staying in an emergency or family violence shelter;
  - (vi) An AU member who is staying in a non-ADATSA drug and alcohol treatment center.
- (2) We may shorten or lengthen your certification period to match your cash or medical assistance end date unless you have already received the maximum certification allowable for your AU.
- (3) We terminate your certification period when:
  - (a) We get proof of a change that makes your AU ineligible; or
  - (b) We get information that your AU is ineligible; and
  - (c) You do not provide needed information to verify your AU's circumstances.

### CLARIFYING INFORMATION

1. Do **not** limit certification periods to three months unless absolutely required by the rules. Certify food assistance households for the **maximum** period, based on the household's situation. Limit three-month certification periods to those listed in WAC 388-416-0005 (1)(d) above.
2. The certification period starts on the effective date of eligibility, regardless of the household's receipt of benefits for the initial month.

### EXAMPLE

Client applies for food assistance on 1/31/02 and is eligible for \$4. The client does not receive benefits for January because the initial amount is less than \$10. The 12-month certification period starts 1/31/02 and ends on 12/31/02.

### WORKER RESPONSIBILITIES

**NOTE:** Unless an AU meets the criteria in 1. or 2. below, do not extend a certification period without a new determination of eligibility. If you extend

the certification period, you must send a new approval letter.

1. Extend or shorten a food assistance certification period to match a cash assistance end date. However, do not exceed the maximum certification periods of:
  - a. 24 months if everyone in the AU is elderly and no one in the AU has earned income or cash assistance.
  - b. 12 months if everyone in the AU is disabled or elderly and no one in the AU has earned income.

**EXAMPLE**

AU's 12-month food assistance certification ends 2/28/02. On 1/17/02, you approve TANF. Do not extend the certification period beyond 2/28/02 without a new determination of eligibility. Use the TANF application for your new determination.

2. If an AU has a three-month certification and is eligible on or after the 16<sup>th</sup> of the month, extend the certification period to give the AU three full months of food assistance.

**NOTE:** Unless you are matching the food assistance end date with the cash or medical end date do **not** shorten a certification period. If you terminate a certification period you must give advance and adequate notice as required under WAC 388-458-0010

3. Terminate a certification period when:
  - a. You get information that shows the household is ineligible; **and**
  - b. The household does not cooperate in clarifying its circumstances.

**EXAMPLE**

You receive information from an anonymous source that a client is working and the alleged income is over the gross income standard. You request, in writing, that the client either verify the income received or deny the allegation. If the client does not respond within ten days, close the case with advance and adequate notice.

4. Terminate benefits when you have verification of a change that makes an AU ineligible.

**EXAMPLE 1**

Mail marked "addressee moved" returns and lists an out-of-state forwarding address. The client calls to tell you he has moved out of state. You may now close the case.

**EXAMPLE 2**

Client calls to report he is working. The reported income exceeds the net income limit for TANF but not for food assistance. **Do not close the food assistance.** Request verification of the income. If the **verified** income exceeds the food assistance income standard, close the case with advance and adequate notice.